

THE
Chap-Book
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Contents for February 15, 1895.

'EPOI A'AYTE	THEODORE WRATISLAW
THE MAN WHO DARES	
	LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON
ABDIEL	J. RUSSELL TAYLOR
TRANSMIGRATION; OR, THE CAT	
	ELEANOR B. CALDWELL
DRAWING	DAWSON WATSON
THE LAND OF THE STRADDLE-BUG	
CONCLUSION	HAMLIN GARLAND
TO A PORTRAIT OF A WESTERN POET	
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ANNOUNCEMENTS	

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LECTURE HEADINGS.

- I. The Heritage of Louis XIV. and Louis XV
- II. Paris and Versailles.
- III. Mending the Old Garment with New Cloth.
- IV. The Revolution before the Revolution.
- V. A Typical Family Tragedy of Portentous Historical Import.
- VI. The States-General.
- VII. "The Party of One Man."
- VIII. The 5th and 6th of October, 1789, and the Memoir of the 15th.
- IX. The Decisive Defeat of November 7th.
- X. Other Defeats and Mischievous Victories.
- XI. Mirabeau and the Court.
- XII. The End. A Unique Tragedy.

* * All questions which, for the general public, are perhaps the most difficult to understand, are lucidly and graphically discussed. Such a mass of information and suggestion is condensed into each of these lectures that no extracts would adequately represent their character.

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"EPOS D'ATTE

RIMSON nor yellow roses nor
The savour of the mounting sea
Are worth the perfume I adore
That clings to thee.

The languid-headed lilies tire,
The changeless waters weary me :
I ache with passionate desire
Of thine and thee.

There are but these things in the world—
Thy mouth of fire,
Thy breasts, thy hands, thy hair upcurled
And my desire !

THEODORE WRATISLAW.

THE MAN WHO DARES

"BALLADS AND SONGS," BY JOHN DAVIDSON.



RANT ALLEN has written of "The Woman Who Did"—and the title suggests that John Davidson may fitly be called "The Man Who Dares;" for certainly some of his themes and some of his lines, in this his latest book, are among the most daring in modern literature.

Richard Le Gallienne, in comparing William Watson and John Davidson, suggests that Davidson is a great man, and Watson a great manner. This is a statement I am not ready to indorse. I think Watson has much more than a great manner. He has noble and stately thought; a large

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outlook; and, in his own direction, subtle and keen perception. He knows the moods of the spirit; the reach of the soul; but the human heart does not cry out to him. He waits in the stately Court of the Intellect, and surveys the far heavens through its luminous windows.

Davidson, on the contrary, hearkens to the heart's cry. The passionate senses clamour in his lines. Ceaseless unrest assails him. Doubt and faith war in him for mastery. Above all he is human; and, secondly, he is modern. "Perfervid," "A Practical Novelist," and two or three other tales, at once merry and fantastic, prove his gifts as a story-teller. He has written several delightful plays, among which "Scaramouch In Naxos" is, perhaps, the most remarkable. Its originality, its charm, its wayward grace give it a place to itself in modern literature; and I doubt if we have any other man who could have given us quite the same thing. But when the right to careful attention of his other work has been fully admitted, I am inclined to think that nowhere does he more thoroughly prove his high claim to distinction than in his "Fleet-Street Eclogues," and his new volume of "Ballads and Songs."

Of all these Ballads the three that have most moved me are "A Ballad of a Nun," "A Ballad of Heaven," and "A Ballad of Hell." There is much crude strength in "A Ballad in Blank Verse of the Making of a Poet"—but the blank verse, impassioned though it be, has neither the stately splendour of Milton nor the artistic and finished grace of Tennyson. It is full of stress and strain—this story of a youth who was brought up by a father and mother who really believed that the soul's probation ends with this brief span of earthly life, and that

"In life it is your privilege to choose,

But after death you have no choice at all."

He tortured his mother by his unbelief, until he slowly

broke her heart, and "she died, in anguish for his sins." His father upbraided him, and he cried—very naturally, if not very poetically—

"Oh, let me be!"

Then he sought his Aphrodite, and found her, dull, tawdry, unbeautiful—an outcast of the streets. He wrote his dreams—and then he felt that they were lies. He grew desperate, at last, and professed himself convicted of sin, and became a Christian—resolved to please his father, if he could not please himself. But this phase could not last; and he shattered his father's new-found happiness by a wild denunciation of all creeds, and an assertion that there is no God higher than ourselves. Then was the father torn between his desire to seek his wife in Heaven, and his impulse to go with his son into the jaws of Hell. At last, in his turn, the father died; and the poet—the child of storm and stress—was left at liberty to be himself—

—"a thoroughfare

For all the pageantry of Time; to catch
The mutterings of the Spirit of the Hour,
And make them known."

There are lines, here and there, in this poem of exquisite beauty; but there are others that seem to me "tolerable and not to be endured."

I make my "Exodus From Houndsditch," without as yet being tempted to linger there, and come to "A Ballad of a Nun." And here, indeed, you have something of which only John Davidson has proved himself capable. The Ballad tells the old Roman Catholic legend of the Nun whom the lust of the flesh tempted.

There are stanzas here of such splendid power and beauty that they thrill one like noble and stirring music. You shall listen to some of them. The Abbess loved this Nun

so well that she had trusted her above all the rest, and made her the Keeper of the Door:—

High on a hill the Convent hung,
Across a duchy looking down,
Where everlasting mountains flung
Their shadows over tower and town.

The jewels of their lofty snows
In constellations flashed at night;
Above their crests the moon arose;
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

Long ere she left her cloudy bed,
Still dreaming in the orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The adventurous sun took heaven by storm;
Clouds scattered largesses of rain;
The sounding cities, rich and warm,
Smouldered and glittered in the plain.

Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned
That turned her sweet blood into wine.

Sometimes she heard a serenade
Complaining sweetly, far away:
She said, "A young man wooes a maid;"
And dreamt of love till break of day.

In vain she plied her knotted scourge. Day after day she "had still the same red sin to purge." Winter came, and the snow shut in hill and plain; and she watched the nearest city glow beneath the frosty sky. "Her hungry heart devoured the town;" until, at last, she tore her fillet and veil

into strips, and cast aside the ring and bracelet that she wore as the betrothed of Christ:—

Life's dearest meaning I shall probe;
Lo! I shall taste of love, at last!
Away!" She doffed her outer robe,
And sent it sailing down the blast.

Her body seemed to warm the wind;
With bleeding feet o'er ice she ran:
"I leave the righteous God behind;
I go to worship sinful man."

She reached "the sounding city's gate." She drank the wild cup of love to the dregs. She cried—

"I am sister to the mountains, now,
And sister to the sun and moon."

She made her queen-like progress. She loved and lived—

But soon her fire to ashes burned;
Her beauty changed to haggardness;
Her golden hair to silver turned;
The hour came of her last caress.

At midnight from her lonely bed
She rose, and said, "I have had my will."
The old ragged robe she donned, and fled
Back to the convent on the hill.

She blessed, as she ran thither, the comfortable convent laws by which nuns who had sinned as she had done were buried alive. But I must copy the remaining stanzas, for no condensation can do justice to their tender, piteous, triumphant charm:—

Like tired bells chiming in their sleep,
The wind faint peals of laughter bore;

She stopped her ears and climbed the steep,
And thundered at the convent door.

It opened straight: she entered in,
And at the Wardress' feet fell prone:

"I come to purge away my sin;
Bury me, close me up in stone."

The Wardress raised her tenderly;
She touched her wet and fast-shut eyes:

"Look, sister; sister, look at me;
Look; can you see through my disguise?"

She looked, and saw her own sad face,
And trembled, wondering, "Who art thou?"

"God sent me down to fill your place:
I am the Virgin Mary now."

And with the word, God's mother shone:
The wanderer whispered, "Mary, Hail!"
The vision helped her to put on
Bracelet and fillet, ring and veil.

"You are sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the day and night;
Sister to God." And on the brow
She kissed her thrice, and left her sight.

While dreaming in her cloudy bed,
Far in the crimson orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

"A Ballad of a Nun" seems to me Mr. Davidson's crowning achievement; yet "A Ballad of Heaven," and "A Ballad of Hell" are scarcely less striking. In "A Ballad of Heaven" there is a musician who works for years

at one great composition. The world ignores him. His wife and child, clothed in rags, are starving in their windy garret, but he does not know it, for he dwells in the strange, far heaven of his music.

Wistful he grew, but never feared;
For always on the midnight skies
His rich orchestral score appeared,
In stars and zones and galaxies.

He turns, at last, from his completed score to seek the sympathy of love; but wife and child are lying dead. He gathers to his breast the stark, wan wife with the baby skeleton in her arms.

"You see you are alive," he cried.
He rocked them gently to and fro.
"No, no, my love, you have not died;
Nor you, my little fellow; no."

Long in his arms he strained his dead,
And crooned an antique lullaby;
Then laid them on the lowly bed,
And broke down with a doleful cry.

Then his own heart broke, at last, and he, too, was dead.

Straightway he stood at heaven's gate
Abashed, and trembling for his sin:
I trow he had not long to wait
For God came out and led him in.

And then there ran a radiant pair,
Ruddy with haste and eager-eyed,
To meet him first upon the stair—
His wife and child, beatified.

God, smiling, took him by the hand,
And led him to the brink of heaven:

He saw where systems whirling stand,
Where galaxies like snow are driven.

And lo! it was to his own music that the very spheres
were moving.

"A Ballad of Hell" tells the story of a woman's love and a woman's courage. Her lover writes her that he must go to prison, unless he marries, the next day, his cousin whom he abhors. There is no refuge but in death; and by her love he conjures her to kill herself at midnight, and meet him, though it must be in Hell. She waited till sleep has fallen on the house. Then out into the night she went, and hurried to the trysting oak, and there she drove her dagger home into her heart, and fell on sleep. She woke in Hell. The devil was quite ready to welcome her; but she answered him only—

"I am young Malespina's bride;
Has he come hither yet?"

But Malespina had turned coward, when the supreme test came, and he was to marry his cousin on the morrow. For long, and long, she would not believe; but when long waiting brought certainty, at last, she cried—

"I was betrayed. I will not stay."

And straight across the gulf between Hell and Heaven she walked:—

To her it seemed a meadow fair;
And flowers sprang up about her feet;
She entered Heaven; she climbed the stair;
And knelt down at the mercy-seat.

Next to these three Ballads I should rank "Thirty Bob A Week." It is of the solid earth, and has none of the Dantesque weirdness of the Ballads of Hell and Heaven—but it is stronger than either of them in its own way—this

monologue of the man who must live on thirty shillings a week, and make the best of it.

But the difficultest go to understand,
And the difficultest job a man can do,
Is to come it brave and meek, with thirty bob a week,
And feel that that 's the proper thing for you.

It 's a naked child against a hungry wolf;
It 's playing bowls upon a splitting wreck;
It 's walking on a string across a gulf,
With millstones fore-and-aft about your neck;
But the thing is daily done by many and many a one;
And we fall, face-forward, fighting, on the deck.

Here is a man to whom nothing human is foreign—who understands *because* he feels.

It is the "Ballads," rather than the "Songs," which give to this book its exceptional value, yet some of the Songs are charming—for instance, the two "To the Street Piano," "A Labourer's Wife," and "After the End." Indeed there is nothing in the volume more deeply imbued with the human sympathy, of which Mr. Davidson's work is so pregnant, than these two songs. Witness the refrain to the one which the labourer's wife sings:

Oh ! once I had my fling !
I romped at ging-go-ring;
I used to dance and sing,
And play at everything.
I never feared the light;
I shrank from no one's sight;
I saw the world was right;
I always slept at night.

But in an evil hour she married, "on the sly." Now three pale children fight and whine all day—her "man"

gets drunk,—her head and her bones are sore, and her heart is hacked—and she sings—

Now I fear the light;
I shrink from every sight;
I see there's nothing right;
I hope to die to-night.

"After the End" is in a very different key. It is more universal. Kings and queens, as well as the humblest of their subjects, may well cry out, into the unknown dark—

After the end of all things,
After the years are spent,
After the loom is broken,
After the robe is rent,
Will there be hearts a-beating,
Will friend converse with friend,
Will men and women be lovers,
After the end?

"In Romney Marsh" is a fascinating bit of landscape-painting; and "A Cinque Port" has a melancholy and suggestive beauty that makes me long for space to copy it. The "Songs" for "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn" and "Winter" are charming, also.

There is thought enough and strength enough, in the "Songs," "To the New Women," and "To the New Men"—but they are rhymed prose, rather than poetry—if, indeed, "what" and "hot" can be said to *rhyme* with "thought."

Why, oh why, does Mr. Davidson treat us to such uncouth words as "bellettrist," and "moneymers," and "strapadoes?"—why talk to us of "apes in lusts unspoken," and "fools, who lick the lip and roll the lustful eye?" "The Exodus From Houndsditch," which contains these phrases,

is certainly hard reading; but one is compelled, all the same, to read it more than once, for it is pregnant with thought, and here and there it is starred with splendid lines, such as—

The chill wind whispered winter; night set in;
Stars flickered high; and like a tidal wave,
He heard the rolling multitudinous din
Of life the city lave—

or the picture of some fantastic world,

Where wild weeds halfway down the frowning bank
Flutter, like poor apparel stained and sere,
And lamplike flowers, with hearts of gold, their rank
And baleful blossoms rear.

One closes Mr. Davidson's book with reluctance, and with a haunting sense of beauty, and power, and the promise of yet greater things to come. He is a young man—scarcely past thirty—what laurels are springing up for him to gather in the future, who shall say? Happily he is not faultless—since for the faultless there is no perspective of hope.

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.

ABDIEL

HE seraph paused and hovered light
With humming wings a moment there,
Just opposite the flickering glare
Where Hell-gate lit the night,—

Hung poised, and listened: o'er the swell
Of inarticulate muttering
Through chaos echoed a strange thing,
A noise of viols in Hell! . . .

Then he remembered, gliding o'er
The sunken blaze a-growl with mirth,
That Cleopatra of the Earth
Had died the night before.

J. RUSSELL TAYLOR.

TRANSMIGRATION; OR, THE CAT

"And the cat came back."



T was transmigration," said the Chevalier. "For one moment the soul of the cat was hers."

All evening the thing stole about the rooms—a large, yellow-striped feline. It preferred the larger room at the rear, where the lights were subdued.

The Chevalier first caught sight of the cat in the dressing-room above, outside the window of which it stood and glared in upon his six feet of tinsel and velvet. He stood straight—surprised, amused at the two greenish-yellowish headlights of his critic behind the glass.

Two strides brought him to the window, and he threw it open. "You are not in costume, my friend, but I invite you to the ball!" And the cat softly stepped over the sill.

The Chevalier met his lady at the stair, a very small lady not reaching to his shoulder.

And the cat carefully followed down. It circled them at the door and entered first; moved, velvety, quite to the centre of the brightly lighted room and stood there, unannounced, stared at, in its turn, by all the curiously or beautifully arrayed ladies and gentlemen ranged against the walls. There was an amused hush, and then a some one jumped forward—"scat!" hissed through the silence. Like a flash the cat darted down the long rooms into the dimness.

And the ball began.

The Chevalier and his lady danced—up the long rooms swept the gay couples, hand in hand, one behind the other—a festoon of color. And sinuously creeping after, over seats, hugging the wall, clinging to the margin of the wainscot, the cat followed. Always in a line with the Chevalier and the lady, always its yellow eyes fixed upon them.

When the waltz came, it sprang upon the upright piano.

Gently shaking with the vibration of the instrument, it sat there statuesque, but for the turning of the eyes en route with its couple—and when they whirled past, a raise of the tail, a snake-like curl and fall of it over the end of the piano.

The Chevalier seated the lady on a divan in the shadow—the cat had crept along the wall and insinuated itself between them. “We will promenade,” said the Chevalier. But the cat rhythmically followed.

The guests began to wonder.

The lady shuddered. They stood by a window to listen to a song, and the cat had disappeared.

But suddenly a thud came upon the lady’s coiffure, and from above the cat dropped, clinging there. The lady uttered a cry; the Chevalier caught the beast, holding it at length with his long arm—thrust up the window, and it was gone into nothingness.

The ball went on—lights, music, laughter.

Now the guests were scattering. “A last waltz,” cried the Chevalier, and they rounded it quite madly.

But in the midst, the lady leapt back alone. For one second she stood under the lights.

The music ceased, all looked to her.

A sinuous spring and she was four feet from the floor, climbing cat-like a range of shelves toward the ceiling. She stood upon the topmost, waving her arms in noiseless undulations, each movement flowing into the other. And a yellow, expressionless glare entered her eyes, fixed on those below. They stood swallowing time.

“Scat!” The word snapped through the tense air—it was the Chevalier.

The crowd relaxed, the lady, up there, ceased moving her arms. She looked down dazedly, dizzily, rubbing her eyes in a lady-like, helpless way.

She clasped her hands, “Oh! how shall I get down!”

"Drop!" cried the Chevalier. And seizing one corner of the Venetian's gown, made a basket—a clown in red striped tights stepped forward to hold the other corner. As she fell the candles sputtered in their sockets, a scuttling sound was heard along the wall of the rooms, and at the open window a wailing 'meow!' swept into the outer air. Way below there a yellow-striped bundle of fur lay dead.

ELEANOR B. CALDWELL.

THE LAND OF THE STRADDLE-BUG

CONCLUSION.

TO his clear sense the whole thing seemed monstrous. He had been brought up to respect the marriage bond and to respect women. The illicit was impossible to his strong soul and the passions incidental to buoyant manhood he had kept under perfect control. He took no credit to himself for this—it seemed natural. All the men he had associated with, had been strict respecters of marriage, though some of them were obscene, (thoughtlessly, he always believed,) and now Jim, his chum had done this thing!

When he thought of Blanche he was more at a loss. Estelle came to his mind as a type of woman's purity and he could not understand how a woman could be so faithless or so weak.

He could not trust himself to speak to her. The blubbering of the kettle aroused him and he went about getting supper. After a few moments he felt able to ask—

"Will you make the biscuit, Mrs. Burke?"

She made no reply and as he looked at her she sat like an old gypsy, crouched low, with brooding face. She seemed to be suffering and he respected her for that.

She too, was wordless. It was a curious thing, but she had looked to Bailey for justification. If she could only speak

now! If she only had words to tell him her thought, he would at least not despise her as a lewd woman. Her eyes sought him piteously, but she could not lift her voice.

Rivers was an interested party—so was Burke—neither of them could sit in judgment on her case, but Bailey was the third person. He typified the world to her and he was clean and kindly—and now he seemed to condemn her because she could not speak.

Then a wave of indignation came over her. He ought to know without being told. He ought not to condemn her without hearing her side of the case.

Then she tried to formulate her argument in her mind ready to utter. She had never been trained to voice her deepest emotions and she was silent where she should have been most eloquent.

Trained to laugh when she should weep, and to be petulant when she should have been patient and forbearing, what could she say of the over-mastering desire to be a mother; of the pressure of loneliness and poverty, and of the power of a man who stood in her fancy among the most brilliant men of his state?

She felt herself in the grasp of forces as vast, as impersonal, and as illimitable as the wind and the sky, and plain; but reduced to words her plea for mercy from Bailey would have been, "I could not help it."

Her maternity, which should have been her glory and her pride, was an insupportable shame now. She had experienced her moments of emotional exaltation wherein she was lifted above self-abasement, but now she crouched in the lowest depths of self-suspicion. The rising storm seemed the approach of remorseless judgment day, the howl of the wind savagely unsympathetic.

She did not trouble herself about Burke. At times she flamed out in anger against his weakness, his business failures,

his boyish gullibility—and for the moment, Rivers seemed self-seeking. He might have taken her away before, it was certain he had neglected her.

She watched Bailey furtively. The firm lines of his face, his sturdy figure and his frank, brusque manner were as familiar to her as the face of Rivers, and almost as dear,—but she could not speak! Then her eyes grew retrospective and she drew her shawl about her with an air of protection habitual now.

Rivers returned soon and took off his over-coat without looking at Bailey, who bustled about getting the supper. As he worked his resolute cheerfulness seemed to come back to him.

Rivers sat down beside Blanche with a distinct air of bravado.

"It would be death to you to go out," he said. "I could make it all right, but we must wait."

Bailey could not hear the words she spoke, nor his again in reply. Rivers seemed to be reassuring her, however.

"Supper's ready," said Bailey.

Something in his voice and manner affected Blanche deeply. She buried her face in her hands and wept while Rivers sat helplessly looking at her. She seemed able to read Bailey's thought toward her and there was infinite compassion in his voice, hearty but with a note of constraint in it.

She shook her head. She could not rise and walk before him yet. The shame of her sin weighed her down.

He poured some tea and gave it to Rivers.

"Take this to her and I'll toast some bread."

She drank the tea, but refused food, and Rivers sat down again still wearing an air of defiance, though Bailey did not appear to notice it. He passed the food and poured the tea in silence.

Once he said,—

"This is the hardest winter I have ever seen in the West."

"It's hell on the squatters," Rivers replied for want of other words.

"I do n't know what they'll do. No money and no work for most of them. They'll have to burn hay. If it had n't been for buffalo bones I guess they would n't have a cent." This ended the talk at the table.

After rising from supper Bailey moved about doing up the work. He was very thoughtful, and the constraint increased in tension.

There was something terrifying in the attitude of his friend. Rivers was sullen and bitter and irritated at this interception of nature, all the more because he could have closed up his affairs a week earlier almost as well.

The storm steadily increased. Its lashings of sleet grew each hour more furious. The cabin did not reel, for it sat close in a socket of sods—it endured in the rush of snow like a rock set in the swash of savage seas.

The snow came in around the stove-pipe and fell in a fine shower down upon their hands with a faintly stinging touch and the circle of warmth about the fire grew less wide each hour.

The stove roared sympathetically, as a chained leopard might answer a lion outside. Slender mice came out from their dark corners and skittered across the floor before the silent figures, rejoicing in the fire, their sleek sides palpitating with timorous excitement.

Bailey hovered over the stove trying to figure up some accounts. Occasionally he spoke to Rivers, but got no reply. Rivers sat beside Blanche. With watchful care he kept her shawl upon her shoulders and her feet wrapped in a blanket. He talked to her in a voice inaudible to Bailey, who studied them with an occasional keen glance.

"Well now," he said at last. "No use sitting here any

longer—we might as well turn in. Jim you take the bunk over there and Mrs. Burke you take the bed. I'll make up a shake-down and keep the fire going."

Rivers sullenly acquiesced and Blanche lay down, without removing her outside garments, in the same bed in which she had slept that first night in this wild land—that beautiful buoyant spring night.

Rivers heaped blankets upon her and tenderly tucked her in, whispered good night, and without a word to Bailey rolled himself in a blanket and lay down in his bunk.

So in the darkness, while the storm intensified with shrieking wild voices, with whistling roar and fluttering tumult, Bailey gave his whole thought to the elemental war within. His mind went out first to Burke, who seemed some way to be the wronged man and chief sufferer. He was out there alone in the cold and snow and by contrast Rivers seemed lustful and savage and treacherous.

Such a drama had never come into Bailey's immediate life. He had read of similar cases in the papers and had passed judgment on the man and woman, easily. He had called the woman wanton and the man a villain, but that did not answer here. He had liked Mrs. Burke and he had loved his friend. They had both looked into his face many times during the last six months and he had seen no signs of degradation in their faces; on the contrary she at least seemed more refined and dignified. She had apparently grown in womanly qualities—

He could reach no conclusion, so he put the question from him and willed himself to sleep.

When he awoke he thought it was morning, but there was no light. There was no change except an increase of ferocity. The roar was steady, high-keyed, relentless. A myriad new voices joined the screaming tumult. The cold was keen as a wolf's fang. He looked at his watch and found it marking the hour of sun-rise.



He renewed the fire and began preparations for breakfast. Rivers awoke at the clatter of the dishes and rose and scraped a peep-hole in a window-pane. Nothing could be seen but a chaos of snow.

"No moving out o' here to-day," he said with a sullen curse.

Bailey assumed a cheerful tone.

"No—we're in for another day of it."

Inwardly he was appalled at the thought of what the day should bring to him. Must he spend the whole day in this terrible constraint?

He set about the attempt to break it up. He whistled and sang at his work and tried to talk to Jim as if there were no evil passions present. He broached all sorts of topics, he even related stories.

"This is the fourth blizzard this winter. Good thing they didn't come last winter, this land would n't have been settled at all."

Rivers did not respond.

Blanche tried to rise, but turned white and dizzy and fell back upon her bed, seized with a sudden nausea. Rivers brought her some tea and sat by her side, while Bailey again toasted some bread for her. She looked very weak and ill.

Bailey fed the horses himself and then took up the work around the room. Finding Rivers still sullen, he got out some old magazines and read aloud the continued stories. Rivers swore under his breath, but Blanche listened to them closely. They dealt mostly with young people who wished to marry, but were prevented by somebody who wished them to marry according to their station. They were innocent creatures who had not known any other attachment, and their bliss was unalloyed at the end of the last chapter.

Bailey read the tender passages with the same loud monotone with which he described the shipwreck, and it would

have been funny to any other group of persons. They did not smile.

Blanche was filled with rebellion, and regret that she should not have known Rivers in the days when she, too, was young and innocent.

At noon, when Rivers went out to feed the team, Bailey went over toward the wretched woman. She saw him coming and shrank.

"Mrs. Burke—I hope you've decided not to do this thing."

She looked at him with shrinking eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you can't afford to go away with Jim this way."

"What can I do. I can't live without him and I can't go back."

"Well, then, go away alone. Go back to your folks."

"O, I can't do that! Can't you see," she said, finding words with effort. "Can't you see I *must* go, he's my husband now, I must be true to him, now? My folks can't help me—nobody can help me but Jim—if he stands by me I can live." She stopped, feeling sure she had said nothing—nothing!

"There's some way out of it." Bailey said and his hesitation helped her. She saw he was thinking upon the problem and found it not at all a clear case against her.

Rivers returned before Bailey spoke again and they sat by the fire talking about the storm—at least Bailey talked and Rivers had the grace to listen and he really seemed less sullen and more thoughtful.

Outside, the storm howled on. The eye could not penetrate it fifty feet. The snow streamed through the air on level lines. It rose from the ground in waves which buffeted each other and fell in showers only to rise again in ceaseless, tumultuous action. There was no sky and no

earth, everything slid, sifted, drifted in clouds and streams.

The three prisoners fell at last into silence. They sat in the dim yellow-gray dusk and stared gloomily at the stove—at the mice. They grew strange to each other. They met each other's eyes at intervals with surprise and horror—each face looked so ghastly and so sombre—the outside world seemed utterly lost in the tempest. Wailing voices sobbed in the stove, and at the windows. Sudden agonized shrieks came out of the blur of sound. The hours drew out to enormous length, though the day was short. The windows were furred deep with frost. It was dark at three o'clock, and the lamp was lighted. As he placed the light on the table Bailey said—

“Well, Jim, another night of it.”

Rivers leaped up as if he had been struck.

“Yes, damn it. It looks as if it would never let up again,” and he raged up and down the room with the spirit of blasphemy burning in his eyes.

“Will you go feed the team, or shall I?” Bailey quietly interrupted.

Rivers went out into the storm with savage resolution, to battle with the wind helped him to ease away his anger and rebellion.

They could not eat any supper—though Bailey prepared it with all the bustle possible in order to forget the wind.

“The storm is sure to end to-night,” he said as they were preparing for bed. As before, Blanche lay down upon the bed, Rivers took the bunk, and Bailey camped upon the floor.

Blanche could not sleep, she lay listening to the storm, thinking strange disconnected thoughts. The strain upon her was twisting her toward insanity. The wind appalled her like the iron resolution of the two men. She saw no end to this elemental strife. It was like the cyclone of July

frozen into snow, only more relentless—more persistent—more implacable. It filled her with emotions far below words.

In the shelter of her Illinois home she had known nothing like this endless crescendo. It seemed as if she *must not sleep*—that she must keep awake for the sake of the little life she had been made guardian of.

As she lay thus, a sudden mysterious exaltation came upon her and she grew warm and happy. She cared for no man. No man's opinion was of consequence to her. She was a mother, and God said to her, "Be peaceful and hopeful." Light fell around her, and pleasant odors of flowers. She looked through sunny vistas of oaks and apple trees. Bees hummed in the clover, and she began to sing with them, and her low humming song melted into the roar of the storm. She saw birds flying like butterflies over fields of daisies, and her song grew louder; it was sweet and maternal—full of lullaby cadences. She lay lovely and careless and sinless as a prattling babe. her eyes fixed upon the gleam of lights in the dark.

A shaking hand was laid on her shoulder—Rivers spoke.

"What is it, Blanche,—are you sick?"

She looked at him drowsily. At last she said slowly, murmuringly,—

"No Jim,—I am happy. See my baby there, in the sunshine."

He grew rigid with fear, and the hair of his head moved. He thought she was delirious—dying.

He gathered her hands in his and fell upon his knees.

"You're sure you're not worse? Can't I help you?"

She did not reply, and he stood holding her hands until she sank into unmistakably quiet sleep.

He feared the unspeakable. He fancied her taken in premature childbirth from the exposure and excitement and

for the first time he took upon himself culpability. The thought of danger to her had not troubled him before. For the poor fool of a husband he cared nothing, but she was his, and the child to come was his. Birth—of which many men make a jest, suddenly took on majesty and terror because a little life was coming to *him*!

That thought brought him a joy never felt before. He was thirty-eight years of age, and the love of children had only just come to him. He had a fierce determination to shield this mother from the storm outside. He bent down and laid his cheek against her hands, and his throat choked with a passionate resolution.

"May God strike me dead if I don't make her happy!"

Then he planned what he should do for her and the child. He put his merry careless young manhood behind him at that moment and assumed the responsibilities of a husband.

* * *

Bailey woke in the night, chilled.

The fire was low, and as he rose to add some coal, he looked about him as usual. Rivers's bunk was empty. He looked toward the bed and saw him wrapped in his buffalo coat, kneeling beside Blanche's pillow. He seemed asleep, his cheek rested upon his right hand, which was clasped in both of hers.

Bailey sat for several minutes thinking, staring straight at his friend. Then he softly fed the fire and lay down again.

His brain whirled as if some sharp blow had dizzied him.

Outside the implacable wind still rushed and warred, and beat and clamored, shrieking, wailing, like voices from hell. The snow dashed like surf against the walls. It seemed to cut off the little cabin from the rest of the world and to dwarf all human action like the sea. It made social conventions of no value and narrowed the question to three human souls.

Lying there in the dark, with the elemental war and wind and snow filling the illimitable arch of sky, he came to feel in a dim, wordless way that this tragedy was born of conventions largely. Also it appeared infinitesimal action, like insects battling, breeding, dying. He came also to feel that the force which moved these human insects, was akin to the ungovernable sweep of the wind and snow,—all inexplicable, elemental, *unmoral*.

His thought came always back to the man kneeling there, and the clasp of the woman's hands—that baffled him—subdued him at last. His thought of Burke was less coercive. He ceased to consider the question as lying between Rivers and Burke—and considered it as related to Burke and Blanche.

He saw that each case must be judged by itself.

There came a sudden new thought. She had been a childless wife,—for years,—she was now to be a mother. Did she not have the right to be a mother?

She was the one to decide. She was the one to be made happy—men can bear such things best. Was it not better that Burke should suffer than that she should suffer, and Jim also?

It was a fine thing in his eyes, that Jim should sit so in the cold and darkness and give the touch of his hand to comfort her. It renewed his love and faith in his schoolmate.

"Jim means well, after all," he concluded.

He put himself in Burke's place and concluded Burke had no claim upon her. Why should she be tortured to make someone else doubtfully happy? She had her rights.

His thought sank deep into human relations. The sad voices in the wind mysteriously aided him to get free, and at last he said—"She shall go if she wishes to. She shall decide." And with that decision sleep came.

When he awoke it was light. The roar of the wind con-

tinued faint, far away, like the humming of a wire with the cold. He lay bewildered, half dreaming, not knowing what it was that still impressed him with such doubt and weariness.

Then he heard a movement in the room and rose on his elbow. Rivers had risen and was peering out at the window.

Bailey suffered a revulsion. In the light of day it was not so simple. He could not bring himself to say what he thought, not just then. Something of the hideousness of his comrade's deed still remained with him.

After Rivers went out he rose and went about the fire. Blanche replied to his words of greeting with a low murmur—

"I feel very weak." She seemed calmer also, and her eyes had lost something of their tension of appeal. Bailey looked at her closely, and his heart softened again. He tried to utter his judgment, but it was not so easy in day light. He waited upon her and tried by his cheerful aid to comfort her.

They ate breakfast in silence as if apprehending the struggle which was coming. Bailey's revulsion to stubbornness continued—even as he planned how to begin the words of his pardon.

At last Rivers rose with abrupt resolution.

"Well, now, I'll bring the team around, and we'll get away.

"Wait a minute, Jim," Bailey said,—and there was a note of pleading in his voice, "wait a little—I've been thinking this thing over. I do n't want you to go away feeling hard towards me," his throat choked up, and his eyes grew dim. "I do n't want to be hard towards you, Jim. It's a mighty big question, and I'm not one to be unjust towards a woman. Of course somebody's got to suffer, but it had n't ought to be the woman—I've made up my mind on that."

Blanche turned toward him with a wondrous look—a look which made him shiver with emotion. He looked down a moment.

"And so—I can't exactly justify *you*, Jim, but I guess it all depends on the woman. She ought to be happy anyway whether we men are or not—so if she thinks she'd better go with you, why I ain't got a word to say."

Blanche gave a low cry, a cry of primeval emotion, such as no woman had ever made in his presence, and fell upon her knees to him.

The cadence of her voice vibrated in his brain deep, deep—far below words. He realized for the first time all she had suffered. Her eyes shone with a marvelous beauty—he was awed by the expression of her face. He feared her mind was going wrong. Rivers seemed deeply moved though Bailey was not aware of it. Blanche held his deepest interest.

"Do n't do that—" he stammered. "Do n't—please! I—do n't deserve anything like that. I give it up, that's all—it's none of my business—do n't give me credit."

She rose but stood looking upon him with a fixed devouring look. He had never seen tears in her eyes before. She had been gay and sullen and tense and sad, but now she was transfigured. Her eyes expanded and grew soft and dark, and her pale face was sad and sweet and full of the grandeur of her coming maternity. The two men felt a species of awe as they looked upon her.

There was a silence, and then Rivers came to Bailey's side and said brokenly—

"Rob, old man, you've done me good—you always *have* done me good—and I'll be faithful to her, so help me God."

Bailey understood him. It was a marriage ceremony. They stood for a moment with clasped hands. Bailey broke tension by saying—

"Well, now get your team—I would n't let you take her out into the cold, only I know she ought to be where a doctor can be reached."

While Rivers was gone he turned to her and helped her with

her cloak and shawl. His heart went out toward her like a brother's love. He talked with cheerful irrelevancy and bustled about heating a boulder for her feet and warming her over-shoes. He wrapped her in every available blanket and shawl, and at last helped her outside.

He tucked the robe around her while Rivers held the restless horses. His voice trembled as he said—

"All right—get her under shelter as quick as you can. Leave the team at Wheatland. I'll come after it in a day or two."

The woman turned toward him. He saw her eyes shine through her veil. She bared her hand and extended it toward him.

He covered it with both of his. The gesture was swift and tender. It seemed to shield and forgive. He put her hand down after a moment's pressure, and drew the robe over it without a word.

"And now, Jim—" he said, and he looked at his chum with misty eyes. Rivers turned away and they again clasped hands without looking at each other.

"Good-bye, old man."

"Good-bye, Jim—and *good luck!*"

Bailey saw Rivers draw the woman close down under the shelter of his shoulder, while his powerful hand whirled the team to the South.

He stood in the lee of the shanty until the swift team was a slowly moving speck on the almost fleckless plain and then he went in and sat down to think on the wondrous look in the woman's eyes.

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Evergreen Eugene,
Dear bard of the wooden-doll mien, Eugene!

O fair Eugene,
Your hair, Eugene,
Would be cheap at a dollar a pair, Eugene.

I have tears, Eugene,
For those spears, Eugene,
On that dome with the leathern ears, Eugene.

'Tis a sight, Eugene,
For night, Eugene,
When ghosts are out on a fright, Eugene.

And I creep, Eugene,
As I peep, Eugene,
Lest it visit me in my sleep, Eugene.

O frank Eugene,
What prank, Eugene,
Of Nature could make you so lank, Eugene?

Was it gin, Eugene,
(Don't grin, Eugene!)
That made you so fearfully thin, Eugene?

What haunt, Eugene,
Of want, Eugene,
Could make you so awfully gaunt, Eugene?

Then your pants, Eugene!
Did your aunts, Eugene,
Make them once on a time in a trance, Eugene?

There's a pang, Eugene,
In their hang, Eugene,
What number were you in the gang, Eugene?

Yet, mad Eugene,
And sad Eugene,
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O sweet Eugene,
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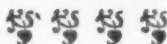
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